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AUTHOR Syfrett, Evelyn E.
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ABSTRACT

Florida state legislation has mandated the evaluation of its compensatory education programs. The Florida Accountability Act of 1976 called for minimum basic skills testing in grades 3, 5, 8, and 11 (subsequently amended to grade 10). In 1977, the Florida Compensatory Education Act mandated remedial programs for students performing below the appropriate achievement level for their age. Furthermore, only the most effective and cost-effective programs--as indicated by pre- and post-test results of the State Student Achievement Test--should be continued. The Florida Department of Education has had difficulty in fulfilling these mandates because of the differences in each district's programs, testing procedures, and student performance requirements. In fact, five studies conducted between 1978 and 1982 have found that it was not possible to comply with these regulations as written. One study suggested three feasible evaluation models; annual statewide trend analysis; state monitoring of district evaluation designs; and criterion referenced testing. The Department of Education's approach now involves a more stringent program approval process, more data analyses, specifications for test items, and legislative amendments. The Compensatory Education Act of 1977 and the Board of Education Rule about qualifying for funding under this Act are appended. (GDC)

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Prepared by

Evelyn E. Syfrett, Ph.D.
Florida Department of Education

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ABSTRACT

A paper discussing specific problems associated with the implementation of legislative mandates concerning the evaluation of Florida's State Compensatory Education Program. Although the state statute requires that the five least cost effective programs in the state be identified annually and not be refunded; the flexibility allowed to each school district to design its own program, including setting objectives and evaluation designs, makes comparison or programs impossible. A copy of the Florida Statute and State Board of Education Rule pertaining to the state compensatory education program are included. The problems discussed would have implications for persons designing state compensatory legislation. Suggestions for program evaluation are included.

SPECIFIC PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGISLATIVE MANDATES CONCERNING EVALUATION OF STATE COMPENSATORY EDUCATION IN FLORIDA

Since 1977, the Florida Legislature has appropriated $226,916,297 to fund State Compensatory Education programs and some 1,600,000 students have been or will be served in the program through 1984-85. Over 90% of the students have met or made gains toward meeting the objective of mastering the state minimum student performance standards through this program.

The Florida Accountability Act of 1976 directed the Commissioner of Education to establish, with the approval of the State Board of Education, minimum performance standards including, but not limited to, basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. The Commissioner was further directed to implement a program of statewide assessment testing to provide for the improvement of the operation and management of the public schools. The statewide assessment program was established for grades 3, 5, 8, and 11 and subsequently amended to grades 3, 5, 8, and 10. In 1977 the Florida Compensatory Education Act was passed to provide supplemental assistance to students identified as needing special educational assistance in order that their level of achievement may be raised to that appropriate for their age.

The intent of the legislature, as stated in the act, is that

> ...each school district shall utilize the instructional programs which in the professional opinion of the teacher will be most effective and that effectiveness of this program shall be evaluated in terms of the increase in student achievement in the basic skills of reading, mathematics, and writing as measured by pretest and post-test of each student receiving special educational assistance from the funds provided by this section.

State Board of Education Rules further qualify the pre and post-tests by providing that such tests must be administered within 30 school days of the beginning and ending of the program.

Funds are allocated on the basis of the number of students who score at or below the 25th percentile on the State Student Assessment Tests (SSAT I and II) and the funds are an entitlement to each district. However, districts must submit an application form describing the program, objectives, and evaluation procedures. Funds may only be used to provide direct remedial instruction to target students and must be supplementary to other state, local and Federal funds.

Student eligibility is determined by the district

> ...on the basis of the district's assessment tests to need special educational assistance in order that the student's

> level of educational attainment in basic skills may be raised to that appropriate for children of the student's age.

Finally, the commissioner is directed by the act to,

> ...evaluate the cost effectiveness of the district compensatory education programs. Of the district programs which have been in operation for 2 or more years, state funding shall be terminated for the five programs which are determined to be the least cost effective each year.

The Department of Education has encountered difficulty in fulfilling these statutory mandates, especially in determining the least cost effective programs, because of the inherent conflict between the standardization needed to compare district programs and the flexibility allowed to districts to determine their own program as long as instruction relates to minimum student performance standards. The numerous problems include:

1. A Variety of Programs

Districts have chosen to conduct the State Compensatory Education (SCE) program at a variety of grade levels and in a variety of delivery systems. Since 1977, over half (55%) of the programs have been conducted in grades 9-12, about one third (31%) have been in grades 6-8 and some 14% in grades K-5. Some districts have placed programs in grades 2, 4, 7, and 9 to provide preventive aid to students who seem at risk of failing the SSAT I and II. Others have developed programs for students who have already failed the SSAT I and II in grades 3, 5, 8, or 10. Districts may also have a combination of both preventive and remedial programs. For example, Dade County in which the city of Miami is located, has a program at every grade level, K-12.

Delivery systems vary from separate classes which students attend the entire school year to pull-out programs which students may attend for a few days or weeks. Other models include team teaching, tutorial, extended day, and extended year programs.

2. The Nature of Tests

Districts use tests for three purposes: selection of eligible students, pre-testing, and posttesting. The state student assessment tests can be used for all three purposes - if - the SCE program is implemented in certain grades. Since the SSAT I and II are only administered in grades 3, 5, 8, and 10 (11, 12 and 13 for retakers who have previously failed), they cannot serve all three purposes. The most frequent solution is to utilize the districtwide achievement test as the selection test so that students can be scheduled for the program prior to the beginning of the school year. Often the achievement testing schedule is more that 30 school days prior to the SCE program's beginning so another test must be chosen as a pretest. If the SSAT I and II are chosen as a pretest or a posttest, the district must devise a parallel test because there is no other form of the SSAT I and II. As a result, districts are using an olio of norm referenced achievement tests, SSAT I and

II, and criterion referenced tests which parallel the SSAT I and II and have been developed by their own district personnel. The variety of tests used is shown on Chart 1. Students in some grades are bombarded by the SCE pre test in the fall; district achievement test, SSAT I and II, and the SCE post-test in the spring. Student motivation becomes a concern with so many tests and some students report that they just "Christmas tree" the answer sheet on the SCE post-test.

Not only is there a problem with the norm referenced/criterion referenced mixture, but there is also the concern that district-developed parallel tests are of unknown or questionable validity and certainly are of unknown comparability from district to district. Other issues include the forms and levels of achievement tests and whether there are alternate forms of district-developed criterion referenced tests. An additional concern is that program evaluation must be based on each student's gain. A student may enter the program late in the year but his/her progress is included in the summary.

3. The Time Frame for Testing

The time between pre and post-test varies from program to program and from district to district. If an SSAT is used as a pretest, there may be a year or more interval before the next SSAT administration which could be used as a post-test. If programs are pull-out/short term units, the post-test may be administered at the end of each unit rather than at the end of the year. If the district achievement test is used as the selection and pre test, the post-test may not be given until the following year.

4. Program Objectives

Although the long term objective for all programs is that students will master the minimum student performance standards and pass the SSAT I and II, short term objectives vary widely. Some districts expect all students to reach 100% mastery while other districts may expect only 70-80% of the students to master the standards or some portion of the standards. Objectives are stated in varying terms such as a "year's progress", a "month's growth for each month in the program", a "percentage of increase", a "grade level growth", or "NCE gains". The flexibility allowed the districts to set their own objectives is useful in that objectives can be related to the needs of the various types of students. This flexibility, however, makes comparisons between districts virtually impossible.

There is also the question of the meaning of "program". There are 67 school districts in Florida but there are multiple SCE programs in each district. The Department considers the reference in the statute to the "five least cost effective programs" to mean five of the 291 programs, not five of the 67 districts.

The legislature, governor's office and state board of education, as well as the auditor general's office, have been much concerned that all provisions of the law have not been implemented and five different studies of the SCE program were

CHART I

State Compensatory Education
District Frequency in Utilization of Tests
1984-85

Test Name	Selection	Pre-test	Post-test
CAT - California Achievement Test	6	5	5
CRT - Criterion Referenced Test (District Developed)	16	44	48
CTBS - Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills	32	2	1
MAT - Metropolitan Achievement Test	4	0	0
PAEC - Panhandle Area Educational Cooperative Test	1	3	4
SAT - Stanford Achievement Test	15	5	5
SFAT - Scott, Foresman Achievement Test	1	1	1
SRA - Science Research Associates	4	0	0
SSAT - State Student Achievement Test	53	37	47
STEP - Sequential Tests of Educational Progress	1	0	0
TASK - Test of Academic Skills	1	0	0
WRAT - Wide Range Achievement Test	1	0	0

4

directed to be carried out between 1978 and 1982. In all five studies, the same conclusion was reported, i.e., it is not possible to comply with the statute and State Board of Education Rule as they are now written. A 1979 study by National Evaluation Systems did offer three feasible models for evaluation and a recommended approach.

Model A: Year-to-Year Statewide Trend Data

> This model is characterized by an absence of separate and distinct testing activities conducted solely for the purpose of evaluating the compensatory education programs. In place of these independent testing activities, the model directs DOE to examine (in more detail than may currently be the practice) the results of the Statewide Basic Skills Tests already in place at grades 3, 5, 8, 11 and 12. In effect, DOE would analyze in detail the large quantity of data already collected and, over the years, identify achievement trends within each district and in the state as a whole. Positive trends would be attributed, at least in part, to the installation of compensatory education programs.

The advantages of this model are its simplicity, ease of administration, and low cost since no additional testing is required. Disadvantages are its lack of emphasis on local information needs and differences in local program designs and its lack of conformity with the Board rule requiring pre-post testing.

Model B: State-Monitoring of District Evaluation Designs

> This model is, in essence, the one currently used by DOE, one that is characterized by the submission of local applications-for-funding that include program descriptions, program objectives, and descriptions of required pre-post testing of all students participating in the local district program...The focus of the model is on ensuring that sufficient information is provided to justify the inference that the outcomes of all funded programs will be evaluated in a valid manner and further, that the resulting information will be meaningful and interpretable...In lieu of comparisons between programs, the model includes the judgment of program effectiveness relative to its own goals and objectives.

The major strength of this model is its responsiveness to

> information needs for program analysis and improvement and the fact that it is likely to result in more serious planning for evaluation. Fully implemented, the model should increase the validity of the data produced by local evaluation designs.

Disadvantages are the lack of compliance with the statute regarding comparisons of program effectiveness, and need for increased resources for administrative and technical needs.

Model C: Criterion Referenced Testing

> Model C is a duplicate of Model B except that it places limitations on the tests that LEAs may use to measure student gains due to program participation. Where compensatory programs are offered in grades for which statewide basic skills tests are available, the model requires that these tests be used as either a pre- or posttest instrument. In the case of Part II of the 11th grade state test, two consecutive administrations may be used for pre- and posttest purposes. Because the other state tests are offered only once per grade level, the model requires that districts use a comparable or equivalent form of a given state test to be used at one of the testing points. This model would be a totally criterion-referenced approach to evaluation.

Advantages of this model include its articulation with state standards and the content validity of the evaluation that will be conducted by the districts. Disadvantages are the requirement for increased state funding for the development of item banks or parallel tests.

The recommended approach based on the three feasible models was that all three be combined to provide a multi-faceted approach to evaluation. The recommendation contained in this study is based on the assumption that both DOE and local education agencies have justified need for evaluative information. Given the unescapable trade-off between statewide standardization and local flexibility in evaluation designs, it became apparent that no single or unidimensional evaluation model would suffice for both purposes. The result is the recommendation that a multifaceted model be implemented such that the needs of both state and local personnel can reasonably be met.

The Department has taken into consideration recommendations from the studies and is now implementing a multifaceted approach to evaluation as follows:

1. More stringent approval process - Regional meetings are held prior to the project submission date and proposed plans are reviewed. Programs which were not successful the previous year are not recommended for refunding unless changes are made. When projects are submitted, they are reviewed to ensure that objectives are realistic and measurable and that the evaluation design is appropriate to measure the objectives.

2. More data analyses - Year to year data are analyzed, especially data reported in A Comparative Analysis of Attainment of Minimum Student Performance Standards by School-School District-Region.

3. Item specifications for the SSAT I and II were distributed to districts to assist them in developing tests which parallel the SSAT I and II. Item banks have been created and distributed for grades 3 and 10 and items for grade 8 will soon be ready for dissemination. A guide to writing test items to state specifications has also been distributed.

4. In addition to the districts' performance data, a ranking of districts, based on the extent to which students met the objectives set by the districts, was included in the 1983-84 annual report. A report of the cost per student and cost per FTE was prepared.

5. An intensive effort was made to ensure that students who participated in SCE programs are identified on the SSAT I and II. A report was then prepared from the DOE master tape showing how well the SCE students performed on these tests.

6. Amendments to the statute and State Board of Education rules have been drafted. During the 1984 legislative session six bills which would have amended the statute were filed; however, none of the bills passed.

Problems which continue to interfere with a valid evaluation of the success of the SCE program are:

- The inherent inconsistency within the statute which requires standardization for comparison of cost effectiveness across districts and the flexibility allowed to districts to choose their own programs.

- The doubtful validity of district-developed tests and lack of a statewide criterion-referenced test to use as a post-test.

- The doubtful validity of the identification process for SCE students taking the SSAT I and II, and

- The unsuccessful attempts to amend the statute.

The Department continues to work toward a better model for evaluation because it is believed that the program is needed and worthwhile. Visits to districts, interviews with teachers, administrators and students, audits, and performance evaluation reports do show that the program is effective.

REFERENCE NOTES

1. National Evaluation Systems Compensatory Education Research Project: Three Feasible Models and a Recommended Approach (NES Report No. 3). Amherst, Massachusetts: NES. February 1979.

2. A Comparative Analysis of Attainment of Minimum Performance Standards 1977-1982-1983. Florida Department of Education. 1984.

3. Writing Test Items to State Specifications. Florida Department of Education. June 1984.

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1. Compensatory Education Research Project: Alternative Education Modeling -- Report on the Analysis and Synthesis of District Evaluation Designs. National Evaluation Systems, Inc., November 1978.

2. Compensatory Education Research Project: Alternative Education Modeling --An Inventory of Models and Options. National Evaluation Systems, Inc., December 1978.

3. Compensatory Education Research Project: Alternative Education Modeling -- Three Feasible Models and a Recommended Approach. National Evaluation Systems, Inc., February 1979.

4. Compensatory Education Research Project: Alternative Education Modeling -- Final Report on the Most Viable Model. National Evaluation Systems, Inc., April 1979.

5. Compensatory Education Literature Review. Institute for Educational Finance, University of Florida, March 1979.

6. Preliminary Assessment of the State Compensatory Education Program. Office of the Governor, Program Review and Evaluation Section, Tallahassee, Florida. March 1982.

7. Review of Florida's Minimum Competency and Compensatory Education Program. Florida Education Council. (Draft report), October 1981.

8. Study of the State Compensatory Education Program. Florida Department of Education. July 1982.

236.088 Basic skills and functional literacy compensatory supplement.—

(1) SHORT TITLE.—This section shall be known and may be cited as the "Florida Compensatory Education Act of 1977."

(2) PURPOSE AND INTENT.—The purpose of this section is to provide supplemental funds to each school district to be used for the sole purpose of providing direct remedial instruction to those students enrolled in the K-12 program who have need of special educational assistance in order that their level of educational attainment may be raised to that appropriate for their age. It is the intent of the Legislature that each school district shall utilize the instructional programs which in the professional opinion of the teacher will be most effective and that the effectiveness of this program shall be evaluated in terms of the increase in student achievement in the basic skills of reading, mathematics, and writing as measured by pretest and post-test of each student receiving special educational assistance from the funds provided by this section.

(3) ALLOCATION OF FUNDS.—The funds appropriated annually for this section shall be allocated proportionately to each school district on the basis of the number of students in grades 3, 5, 8, and 11 whose scores on the statewide student assessment tests are at the 25th percentile or below.

(4) DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS.—

(a) To be eligible to receive funds under this section, a school district shall describe in writing its compensatory education program. The description shall include all special remedial and compensatory instruction to be provided by the district from all fund sources. The district description shall include a description of the program to be conducted at each separate school or location in the district and shall include the estimated number of students to participate in the program; the estimated number of teachers, volunteers, and others to be utilized in the program; and the estimated budget for each such program.

(b) The programs provided by funds received under this section shall meet the following criteria:

1. Each participating student shall be determined by the school district on the basis of the district's assessment tests to need special educational assistance in order that the student's level of educational attainment in basic skills may be raised to that appropriate for children of the student's age.

2. The program is based on performance objectives related to educational achievement in the basic skills and provides supplementary services designed to meet the special educational needs of each participating student.

3. The program is evaluated in a manner consistent with the performance objectives and includes a pretest and post-test for each participating student.

4. The state and local funds expended in the program shall be accounted for separately from all other funds expended by the district. Expenditures shall be reported as a categorical program in the manner prescribed by the State Board of Education.

5. The program shall be conducted in a manner which shall permit the exclusion of instructional staff members employed through the use of funds in this program from the comparability requirements of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

6. The program shall be approved by the Commissioner of Education within 60 days of receipt of the program description, and the department shall forward funds to the district.

7. Each application by a district for a grant under the state compensatory education program shall contain an assurance that the use of the grant funds will not result in a decrease in the use for educationally deprived children of state, local, or federal funds which, in the absence of funds under the compensatory education program, have been made available for the education of such children. No project under the state compensatory education program shall be approved unless the state funds for the compensatory education program will not be used to supplant other state, local, or federal funds being used for the education of such students.

(5) ADMINISTRATION.—

(a) The Division of Public Schools shall be utilized as needed to provide technical assistance to districts and to carry out the department's responsibilities for reviewing, monitoring, and evaluating the programs conducted under this section.

(b) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules which in its opinion are necessary to assure that the programs in each school district are carried out in a manner consistent with the purpose and intent of this section. The Commissioner of Education shall prepare, on or before January 10 of each year, a report which shall show the number of students participating in programs under this section, the extent to which student achievement increased, the programs which appear to be most successful, and an analysis of the expenditure of funds by district. Said report shall be transmitted to the State Board of Education and the presiding officers of the Legislature.

(c) Beginning with the 1978-1979 school year, the Commissioner shall evaluate the cost effectiveness of the district compensatory education programs. Of the district programs which have been in operation for 2 or more years, state funding shall be terminated for the five programs which are determined to be the least cost effective each year.

History.—s. 1, ch. 77-392.

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6A-1.9911 Basic Skills and Functional Literacy Compensatory Education Program.

(1) Application and approval of district programs. To qualify for funds under the Compensatory Education Act of 1977, each district school board shall submit a plan to the Commissioner for approval. This plan shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

(a) A description of all remedial and compensatory programs operated in the preceding school fiscal year and programs operating currently in each school in the district, excluding any program to be supported with state compensatory education funds as described in Rule 6A-1.9911(1)(b), FAC. The description shall include:

1. Identification of programs conducted at each separate school or location in the district;

2. The number of students who participated, numbers of teachers, volunteers and others utilized, and expenditures by fund source for each of these programs operated in the preceding year; and

3. The number of students participating, number of teachers, volunteers and other utilized, and budgets by fund source for each of these programs operating currently.

(b) A description of programs to be operated with funds received under this act. The description shall include:

1. Identification of programs to be conducted at each separate school or location in the district;

2. Estimates of the number of students who will participate, number of teachers, volunteers and others to be utilized, and budgets for each of these programs;

3. Evidence that each student selected for participation has been identified by the district as needing special educational assistance in basic skills and that selection was made on an equitable objective basis;

4. Evidence that programs are based on performance objectives related to achievement in basic skills consistent with minimum student performance standards adopted by the State Board, Rule 6A-1.941, FAC;

5. Evidence that programs will provide additional direct instructional services to meet the specific educational needs in basic skills of each student participating in the program and that these services will offer equitable, districtwide, instructional opportunities to students having similar academic needs;

6. Evidence that individual students participating in these programs will be pre-tested and post-tested for evaluation purposes in a manner consistent with the performance objectives;

7. Procedures to be used in collecting and reporting program data to enable the district to submit a report annually, on a date specified by the Commissioner, detailing the number of students participating in programs; the full-time equivalent student membership; the extent to which student achievement increased; programs in reading, writing and mathematics where the greatest gain in achievement occurred; and an analysis of the expenditure of funds.

(c) Assurances that state compensatory education funds received will:

1. Provide for direct remedial instruction in basic skills to selected students in K-12 programs;

2. Support programs which in the professional opinion of the instructional staff will be most effective;

3. Result in no decrease of state, local or federal funds used for educationally deprived children;

4. Be supplemental to FEFP funds generated by students while participating in the program and to any other state or local remedial and compensatory programs, and be allocated and expended in a manner which will not violate the comparability requirements of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (P.L. 89-10).

(2) Evaluation of effectiveness of district programs. In analyzing and evaluating the effectiveness of district compensatory education programs, the Department shall base its studies on growth in the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics, as determined by gains between pre-tests and post-tests administered to students in each approved program.

(a) Pre-test and post-test scores shall be collected for all students participating in the program. When statewide assessment basic skills tests (grades 3, 5, 8, 11) or the functional literacy test (grade 11) are used, the same test administration may serve as both the identification and selection test and as the pre-test for students in these grade. The functional literacy test may also be used as the post-test when used as the pre-test. All other tests must meet the criteria in Rule 6A-1.9911(2)(c), FAC, and may serve as both the identification and selection test and the pre-test if they are administered within thirty (30) school days of the beginning of the program or at the time the student enters the program. If the identification and selection test is a separate test from the pre-test, the pre-test shall be administered within thirty (30) calendar days of the beginning of the program. All post-tests, except the state functional literacy test, shall be administered within thirty (30) calendar days of the termination of the program or at the time the student terminates membership in the program, whichever is first.

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(b) Pre-tests and post-tests used by the district shall be capable of producing a valid measure of basic skills and, beginning in 1978-79, shall be capable of producing comparative scores between districts.

(3) Expenditure of compensatory education funds. Contingent upon approval of a district's compensatory education program plan, state compensatory education funds may be expended for obligations incurred by the district for direct instructional services beginning with the date of receipt by the Department of a substantially approvable plan.

(4) Fiscal accounting and reporting requirements. State compensatory education funds and local funds expended in these programs shall be accounted for in the General Fund by the dimensions of project, school, function and object as defined in "A Manual...Financial and Program Cost Accounting and Reporting for Florida Schools," Rule 6A-1.01, FAC. All federal compensatory education funds shall be accounted for in the Special Revenue Fund by the dimensions of project, school, function and object as defined in "A Manual...Financial and Program Cost Accounting and Reporting for Florida Schools." Each district shall report on the fiscal and instructional aspects and results of all evaluations of its program on the dates and in the manner prescribed by the Commissioner.

Specific Authority 229.053(1), 236.088(3)(b) FS. Law Implemented 236.088 FS. History - New 3-1-78, Amended 5-24-81.

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